

Manager leaves WVCW in capable hands

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At one time, Robert Fleskes had never heard of VCU's radio station, WVCW. Now he is leaving the general manager position he held since fall 1992.

Fleskes in fall 1989 responded to a handwritten flyer stating the radio station needed on-air staff. He got his first shift working from 7-9 a.m. one day a week. And he loved it.

"I knew nothing about radio. I wanted to go into TV, but I figured, 'What the heck.' I went to that first meeting scared to death," Fleskes said.

After coming to VCU in fall 1989 from Fort Walton Beach, Fla., working at the radio station enabled him to meet people and changed his plans for a future in television, he said.

WVCW has come a long way since Fleskes started as a disc jockey. The station was first heard only in the Hibbs building.

"If Hibbs didn't have us on or had the volume down, then we were playing music (only) for ourselves," he said.

Now WVCW, located on the first floor of the New Academic Building, broadcasts 7 a.m. to midnight every day on Continental Cable Radio 105.3 and 640 AM on the VCU campus. The new location and new equipment made WVCW comparable to other Richmond-area radio stations.

"Unfortunately," Fleskes said, "some people still don't know there is a VCU radio station."

The station attempts to create a diverse format with specialty programs such as jazz and rap, he said, because his goal is to

play music which pleases the majority of listeners.

Although the station is raising funds get an FM frequency, which would expand the station's audience, Fleskes estimated expenses will postpone it for at least five years.

Recalling that when he first started, everyone "played" like they were on the radio, he said the station evolved into a realistic training ground for people planning a radio career.

"We try to reflect an image of what real radio is like and have fun doing it," Fleskes said.

He said he believes the best way for students to master their jobs at the station is to learn the basics, then go to work. His hands-off approach to running the show means he intervenes only when one of the directors or disc jockeys has a problem.

"I feel comfortable talking to him if there is something I have a problem with," said WVCW on-air personality, Charlotte Bechtel. "Robert is a real people-person."

Although Fleskes is modest about his role as general manager, others credit him with much of the station's success.

Geof Hammond, music director for WVCW, said the time and effort Fleskes put into the station show in its quality.

"I don't think we would be where we are now if it weren't for Robert," Hammond said.

Fleskes now works full-time as a promotions assistant for Richmond radio station XL102 FM. He started working there two years ago as a part-time on-air personality during weekends, and as office assistant during the week. He said he enjoys his current job more than being on-the-air

because of the variety it offers.

Fleskes cuts his two-year term as WVCW's general manager one semester short when he steps down at the end of this semester. He said he is confident he is leaving the station in capable hands, because with continued support from VCU

administration and involvement by enthusiastic students, the station will have further success.

Just in case, he said he plans to return to ensure that the station keeps its status.

"It's crucial that the station maintains its professionalism," he said.